

GEORGIA'S SMALL BUSINESS WEEK AWARDS



District Director Terri Denison joins Terry Harris, Georgia's 2006 Small Business Person of the Year

Terry Harris of Ranger, Georgia, the 2006 Small Business Person of the Year, was honored along with five other SBA award recipients at a luncheon on April 20 at the Ansley Golf Club in Atlanta.

The luncheon was hosted for the third consecutive year by the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle. This is a non-profit association of banks, non-bank lenders, certified development companies, and other service providers that are active participants in SBA guaranteed small business loan programs.

"As small business lenders, it is very satisfying to honor these outstanding small businesses and their supporters in Georgia," said Bruce Bryant of California Bank & Trust, who is Chairman of the Georgia

Lenders Quality Circle. "As bankers and small business owners, we could not be in a better place to work and play than in Atlanta and the State of Georgia."

Harris is President and CEO of Rubber Wholesalers Inc., of Ranger. He started his company 9 years ago as a wholesale producer of strictly scrap rubber but later reinvented his business as a manufacturer of recycled rubber products that reached \$9.6 million in sales last year. At the same time, the company has added over 45 plant jobs in the past five years and now has over 80 workers at two locations in Ranger, a rural North Georgia community in Gordon County.

Harris's company, Rubber Wholesalers, is a recycling manufacturer of both consumer and industrial products made of scrap rubber from recapped truck tires. One of its fastest growing products is rubber mulch which is heavier than wood chips and will not decompose or attract fungus or mold.

Because of increased demand for its rubber mulch, the company recently added 30,000 square feet of space in a former textile mill in Ranger, the second vacant plant to be used by the small business in recent years.

Two SBA guaranteed loans, made under the SBA's 7(a) Program, have helped finance the growth at Rubber Wholesalers. In 2004, the company received a \$355,000 SBA-backed loan from Omni National Bank in Atlanta. Omni made a second \$400,000 loan to Harris during the first quarter of last year.

Terry Harris was nominated for his award by Jerry Sims, Area Director of the Small Business Development Center in Dalton.

Other SBA Award Winners

Charles Blackmon is the SBA Financial Services Champion of the Year. Blackmon is Executive Director of the DeKalb Enterprise Business Corporation (DEBCO) of Decatur, Georgia. Under his leadership, DEBCO is valued as a premier non-profit financial services organization that contributes a great deal to the economic development of DeKalb County and the surrounding area.

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Awards Luncheon Honors SBA 2006 Georgia Winners

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Sharon Macaluso, Area Director of the Small Business Development Center in Decatur, nominated Charles Blackmon for his award.

Mikell Fryer was honored as the Minority Small Business Champion of the Year for Georgia and the Southeast.

Fryer is manager of the Columbus Career Center and directs a staff of 46 people while providing leadership to numerous minority-owned companies. He is active on the Minority Business Development and Hispanic Business Outreach Committees at the Greater Columbus Chamber.

Fryer was nominated for his awards by Lori Canterbury, Regional Director in Columbus for the Small Business Development Center

Andrea Britt Powell, Publisher of Statesboro Magazine and Savannah Homes & Land Magazine, is the SBA's Small Business Journalist of the Year. Her company, Secrets of the South Media Inc., produces other publications including Visitor Guides for convention bureaus in both Statesboro and Richmond Hill, Georgia.

Ms. Powell was nominated for her award by Lori Durden, Area Director of the Small Business Development Center at Georgia Southern University and Peggy Chapman, President of the Statesboro-Bulloch County Chamber.

The fourth Award went to Ann H. Smith, a CPA from Macon, who was selected the Women in Business



SBA Regional Administrator Nuby J. Fowler, stands with two Georgia winners who also took home SBA Regional Awards in their respective categories. Mikell Fryer of Columbus, left, was selected the Minority Small Business Champion for both Georgia and the Southeast. Werner Richter of Atlanta was named Small Business Exporter of the Year for Georgia and the SBA Southeast Region.

Champion of the Year. As the head of her own firm, Ann H. Smith, CPA, she helps women in business with strategic planning, financial consulting, networking and referrals to other women in business including financial and tax planners.

This is the second SBA award for Smith. In 2003, she was named the Financial Services Advocate of the Year for Georgia.

Smith was nominated for her award by Donald Rhodes, Area Director of the Small Business Development Center in Macon.

Werner Richter, the founder of Global Interactive Solutions (GIS), is the Small Business Exporter of the Year for Georgia and the Southeast Region.

Richter's firm is a worldwide

designer and installer of video and audio conferencing systems. Since it was established, GIS has delivered conferencing products and services to customers in 55 overseas markets.

The family-owned company has a staff of eight technicians.

Richter was nominated by Charles Boyanton, Director of the SBDC International Trade Center at the University of Georgia.

The Keynote Address

SBA Regional Administrator Nuby Fowler was the guest speaker, calling the Lenders Quality Circle a great partner to the SBA and a key to the success of the agency's programs. "Thanks to you, Georgia is the top ranking District in the Southeast," said Fowler.

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Lenders Quality Circle Host SBA Awards Luncheon

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Fowler said the SBA continues to support the economy by creating opportunities for business owners including minorities and women.

"Over the past three years, Terri Denison and I have worked together with leaders in both the African American and Hispanic communities to develop strategies to increase opportunities in the state," she said. "For the first time in the agency's history, lending demographics in Georgia almost parallel the demographics of the state's population."

Fowler was introduced by Miguel Alandete of Georgia Small Business Capital who is Chair-Elect of the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle.

Three Judges Pick Winners

The 2006 judges for the SBA Awards were Antonio Barrios, Assistant Vice President of United Americas Bank; Derek Grayson,



District Director Denison joins Andrea Britt Powell after she was recognized as the Small Business Journalist of the Year at the annual Awards Luncheon in Atlanta.

a Vice President at Peachtree National Bank; and Julie Smith, Director of External Affairs, the Office of Gov. Sonny Perdue.

Nominations for the SBA's Small Business Awards are made by Chambers, trade associations, individuals and others who support the small business community. Many nominations come from SBDC offices which are run by the University of Georgia and are resource partners of the SBA.

Terry Harris and other SBA state and regional winners were honored on April 12-13 during National Small Business Week activities in Washington, D.C.

Major awards were presented, including National Small Business Person of the Year. President Bush also addressed the SBA Phoenix Awards Breakfast. For highlights, go to the SBA national web site at www.sba.gov.



Charles Blackmon, the Financial Services Champion of the Year, is Executive Director of DEBCO, an SBA Micro-lender which is based in DeKalb County.



Ann H. Smith of Macon, the SBA's Women in Business Champion of the Year, writes a regular column for The Macon Telegraph that focuses on small business issues.